

Representation of Identity and Land in Waubgeshig Rice's *Legacy*

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ABSTRACT: This research study attempts to explicate the aspiration of returning to pristine nature in Waubgeshig Rice's novel *Legacy* by applying the theory of eco-criticism. As Indigenous texts represent the symbiotic relationship between culture and nature, which serves as an essential feature of the Indigenous people being their attempt to reconnect to nature through land. The purpose of this is gaining Indigenous identity, which has its origins in peace among all living things. This writing has been analyzed based on nature-centered concepts, traditional and cultural practices, environmental respect and knowledge, and dependency on nature and its resources as portrayed in certain important excerpts. The study will demonstrate how Rice conveyed nature awareness by a simple depiction of the character's harmony with their surroundings and how they find healing through nature. He demonstrates how the human's connection with nature sheds light on postmodern themes such as identity and ethical decline. Rice promotes the idea that the environment plays a significant role as well as being a central factor in the Indigenous existence and how it has a direct influence on them. Discussing discrete characters and their various attributes, as well as the parts these characters are assigned in connection to the world around them through nature, is crucial to understanding the notion of man-environment interaction.

Keywords: Eco-criticism, culture, nature, land, identity, healing.

1. Introduction

Legacy is a novel published in 2014 by Indigenous Canadian writer Waubgeshig Rice who is of Anishinaabe descent. Literature and nature have long had a close and shared relationship. Various writers have studied and underlined this link in their creative works. As a result, literary critics attempt to investigate how the link between literature nature is put into text. Eco-criticism is a critical method developed in the United States in the later half of the 1980s. It can simply be characterized as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Glottfelty, 1996, p. 18)

Eco-criticism is also known to be concerned with the examination of the relationship between nature and humans. Literary eco-criticism is focused on the human-nature relationship as it appears in works of literature. In the essay "*Some Principles of Ecocriticism*" William Howarth explains that eco-criticism is based on four concepts. Howarth claims that while reading a literary work about nature, one might follow a set educated, responsible principles developed from four rules: ethics, language, ecology, and criticism. He asserts that:

Ecology describes the relations between nature and culture...Ethics offers ways to mediate historic social conflicts. Language theory examines how words represent human and nonhuman life. Criticism judges the quality and integrity of words and promotes their dissemination (1996).

Howarth illustrates how these four principles aid in comprehending a piece of literature where nature plays a significant role. When researching environmental literature, these four concepts are crucial.

Rice's *Legacy* can be perceived as an eco-critical work, as it presents characters who find healing through nature by practicing their own cultural traditions. *Legacy* is chosen here because it has not yet received any critical attention. The author being an Indigenous person himself provokes the ideas of the revival of identity and culture by healing through nature within the reader's minds.

The novel is divided into six parts. There are six characters of which five are siblings who live in a Canadian Reserve in Ontario. The first five parts are dedicated to the siblings who struggle with the deaths of their parents who died in a car accident because of a drunken man. They were still struggling with the death of their parents when their sister Eva got murdered. The final part tells the story of a white man who murdered one of the family members.

Rice presents the Native Indian concept that the characters heal through their connection with nature and reconnection with the culture of their ancestors. The psychological trauma or rather dilemma is worse for some of the characters when compared to the others, thus healing for them is more difficult. One attempts suicide while

another seeks out vengeance for his sister. Their older brother and aunt attempt to help them and bring them all together as a family. As the study shows, nature plays a dynamic part in each character's search for connectivity, subjectivity, and genuine identity through cultural practices throughout the novel.

2. IDENTITY STRUGGLE FOR MAJOR CHARACTERS

2.1 Identity Formation

Reading Rice's *Legacy*, one can perceive that the characters are suffering from moral disintegration as well as loss or rather forgotten identity. The struggle of the Indigenous people in reconnecting with their rich ancestry is a recurring topic among Indigenous writers. Their writings concern their folkways, traditions, and values, focusing on the issue of reconnection to identity in such a society than can be seen as white-dominated.

Legacy portrays the issue that the Indigenous people experience in contemporary civilization. Rice writes in regards to the significance of rituals in the narrative structure of his novel. He depicts the character's search for the sense of self, tribe, and place. The author believes that Indigenous people may create or rather reestablish their identity by adhering to their own Indigenous culture. In studying land and the history of a nation, we come to the issue of identity and what identity means. The interpretation of identity per se, as a subject of exploration all on its own, tends to be a moderately neoteric phenomenon belonging to the later half of the 20th century (Edwards, 2009).

Subsequently with the development of the notion of nationalism as we understand it today, that most likely emerged with Romanticism (especially German) and the French Revolution, any postulation of identity customarily became inevitably associated with nationality, ethnicity and more importantly to land itself (Anderson, 1991; Edwards, 2009).

In recent years, identity has grown more popular in conflict analysis. Identity is a social concept with both individual and aggregate meaning. In regards to the Indigenous people of Canada, Joseph (2004) asserts that the notion referring to cultural identity is more or less inclusive to all the groups of people with a "shared cultural heritage"(p. 163).

Having mentioned this, it's crucial to recognize that the characters do acknowledge and regard themselves as the Indigenous people of Canada with their own identity separate from the European white people. In terms of cultural identity and the character's inclination towards their own cultural practices as a means of forming their identity, Geertz (1973) interprets culture as:

an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life (p. 89).

Lapid (1996) in his *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory* asserted that identity, in the singular form, is important to the possibility of identities (plural) being constructed and reproduced through social actions. Therefore, identities emerge and are built rather than being intuitive, substance, like polymorphic or fixed. As a result, rather than being understood as a predetermined endpoint, identity is conceived as a departure or rather divergence from how the Indigenous people have been taught to live by the invaders.

Depending on their individual vantage points, different scholars have approached it in different ways. Thus, identity is described by Erikson (1968) in his *Identity, Youth, and Crisis* as the elements that define "an individual's sense of self." As a result, in the terms of Erikson, the individual's idea of self becomes important to the identity structure. Erikson's (1968) ego identity theory was operationalized by Marcia (1966), who devised four states for ego identity. These four states are founded on the examination and commitment of two dimensions. These states tend to be determined by the person's investigation of identity alternatives and the commitment to a particular identity, and they are distinguished by the degree of exploration and commitment (Sneed, Schwartz, & Cross, 2006). Marcia continues explaining that a person tends to go through the phase of investigation questioning their beliefs and values, before committing to those values and views. Simon in his *Identity in Modern Society: A Social Psychological Perspective* states "Identity consists of a set of internalized role expectations" thus contributing to the notion of commitment and giving prominence to one's identity (2004). Therefore identity offers significance to

one's positions and relationships in society by being an example of the continuity of one's own heritage. Also, identity or rather in this case, acknowledgement of cultural identity helps people discern what background different people come from so as to respect and appreciate them.

In *Legacy* by Waubgeshig Rice, identity can be perceived as a major theme and is brought to attention especially by two of the characters who are Eva and Edgar. In this regard it can be termed as cultural identity for the importance of identity is perceived by both characters from different perspectives in regards to cultural practices as well pride in it.

2.2 Identity Struggle for Eva:

Eva who has come to the city to study wants to prove that Indians such as herself can also become successful in education. She wishes to become a lawyer so as to defend the rights and the stereotypes associated with her people. She believes that her people don't have the rights they deserve. Eva's most disliked topic was Introduction to Canadian politics because the professor singled her out as the Indian in the class and would use her as an example. She believed that this also made the other students attach all the stereotypes about her people to her:

She was outed early on in the semester when the first uncomfortable discussion of "Indians" came up, and the prof asked for a show of hands from the "Indians" enrolled in the course...she became the poster child for the few things "Indian" that came up throughout the course (Rice, 2014, p. 21).

In the above quote, it is very clear that Eva feels very uncomfortable with being singled out as the "Indian" in the class. It is made clear that through the character of Eva, the Indigenous people do not like being labeled as just "Indian". In general, this label or name "is not value-free but rather negatively connoted" (Retzlaff, 2005, p. 610).

One day in class Eva had a very strong argument with her professor. She did not believe that the treaties signed gave the Indians their proper rights. Her professor believed otherwise. He believed that it was the Indian's fault that they were falling behind and not doing more to be successful. She decided to fight back in writing a very strong essay that would prove the Indians were victims. Eva would feel offended that the non-Native people didn't know about the culture of her people or when they would be clueless of any knowledge in regards to Indian people. Despite this, she blamed the education system for not providing proper education about Indians.

Lawrence (2003) explains that the Canadian Indigenous people have faced marginalization, discrimination, economic and social oppression, as well as other challenges that have had a significant impact on their communities. Kinkade (1991) describes how loss of the traditional language is one of these issues: amongst the approximate of 61 Native languages which still continue to be spoken by the Indigenous people in Canada, just three – Inuktitut, Ojibwe and Cree – are seen to have a fair chance of survival in the next generations.

It bothered Eva that her classmates didn't know that there were different native languages in Canada rather than just one which they called "Indian". The lack of knowledge about the different languages of the Indian people is perhaps perceived by Eva as a result of lacking proper knowledge about her people's identity in general. This draws attention to the relationship between language and identity. The languages that the Indigenous or rather Native people of Canada speak are considered to be amongst those that face the danger of extinction, owing to the historical policies of the colonial assimilationists which disrupted or completely ended intergenerational transmission. Joseph asserts that the notion of cultural identity is found to be rather more comprehensive when to all the people who distinguish themselves as communities that encircle the notion of "shared cultural heritage". He continues to explain,

any study of language needs to take consideration of identity if it is to be full and rich and meaningful, because identity is itself at the very heart of what language is about, how it operates, why and how it came into existence and evolved as it did, how it is learned and how it is used, every day, by every user, every time it is used (2004, p. 224).

The above quote explains how language is a part of identity and that by understanding a certain identity one must be knowledgeable about their language. It bothered Eva very much that her classmates or rather the society in general had lacked any prudent knowledge of her language, terming it as just "Indian". The main reason of the extinction of the Indigenous languages was tied to the invaders or the colonial attitude based on their contempt for the Indigenous people. Miller (1996) states "assumptions of racial superiority by Euro-Canadians" (p. 185). Thus, it

lead to the desire for the removal of their native language. In doing so, perhaps the European invaders felt that it would weaken their cultural identity too. It bothers Eva that her own language is unrecognizable to others.

Eva's ambition was to prove herself as an example that Indians such as herself could be successful. She had a dream to prove this by finishing her studies and becoming a lawyer. She believed that through becoming one, she could preserve and defend the name of her Indigenous heritage. Even at University after arguing with her professor she vowed to write an essay on how the Indigenous people of Canada did not receive the rights they deserved. Eva did not believe that the treaties signed gave the Indigenous people any rights. Her professor believed that it was their own fault that they were falling behind. She decided to fight back in her term essay.

A sense of relief and pride overcame her. She would have to win over this stubborn and ignorant academic on paper, and she planned on doing that with her term essay and final exam. But this was enough for today (Rice, 2014, p. 27).

This was all her way of fighting for the identity of her people. By doing so, she wished to leave behind a legacy that Indians could be successful and their names were not always associated with tragedy and violence.

In Eva's case she wanted to bring to attention the importance of her people and how they could be equally educated and successful. Also, she wanted to fight for their rights. She wanted to leave behind a legacy for herself. Unfortunately fate intervened and she did not reach her goal because she was killed. Her legacy lived on through her brother Stanley for he vowed to continue what she started and went on to be a successful lawyer in the city. But when Edgar gave him the address of Mark Miller who killed Eva, Stanley went after him and killed him as a means of vengeance. That same night Eva came to Stanley's dream and told him she was very disappointed in him. In the dream she explains how tragedy is associated to their people:

People remember me as the Indian girl who got beat up and froze to death. They define us. You had a chance to redefine that legacy... But now you are passing on that violent legacy. You're fulfilling that destiny of tragedy... You've carried on the legacy I didn't choose (Rice, 2014, p. 189).

The theme or rather issue of vengeance is presented here. Out of all the siblings Stanley felt the urge for vengeance the most. His other siblings had moved on yet he could not accept Eva's murder and it inspired a feeling of vindictive hatred within him. Maria and Norman healed through the revival of their people's culture through nature at the reservation they lived in but Stanley lived in the city where he had become a successful lawyer. The city or rather urban life is a clear representation of the white colonizers that invaded their lands yet the rural reservation represents the Indigenous people. The fact that Stanley, the only sibling who resided in the city was the one that felt the need for vengeance could be an example of the influence of European colonizers and how associating with them led to such vindictive feelings of vengeance. Frank Iacobucci states:

[...The Indigenous] people spoke about the conflict that exists between First Nations'... ideologies regarding traditional approaches to conflict resolution... The objective of the traditional First Nations' approach to justice is to re-attain harmony, balance, and healing with respect to a particular offence, rather than seeking retribution (2013, p.4).

Eva had always been bothered by how Indians were always defined by tragedy and violence. Her dream was to change that and leave behind a legacy of success but unfortunately didn't get the chance. This serves as the reason why she is not happy with what Stanley did. Eva's words inspire Stanley to turn himself in to the police. Although the story ends when he turns himself in, perhaps the author wishes to tell the reader that if Stanley turns himself in showing he is not happy with murdering Mark Miller; it would not leave behind a legacy of violence and tragedy.

2.3 Identity Struggle for Edgar:

Culture and nature are inextricably linked, entwined, and co-constructed; a simple juxtaposition fails to capture the co-emergence and confluence of these dual partners in a constant process of hybridization. Re-adoption of Indigenous traditional customs binds the First Nations people to their entire Native American history and culture, identifying each individual as a successor of the Native American traditions, resulting in a proclamation of their identity as a Native people. Aside from its existence, people's consumption of the environment can be perceived as

an important factor that “acknowledges the intricate, inextricable network linking culture and environment” (Bate, 1999, p. 559).

Like his sister Eva, Edgar is concerned with the identity of his people. He wishes to bring to attention the identity of his people by reviving the culture of their ancestors. He feels proud that he and his siblings still speak some phrases from their Native tongue. While at a sweat ceremony where his brother Norman greets everyone with their Native language, Edgar reflects:

It was a proud moment for Norman-and especially for his aunt and his brother in the sweat-to be able to lead with the most basic of opening statements in his native tongue. They all shared in that pride of knowing just a bit of the old language (Rice, 2014, p. 150).

The sweat ceremony is a cultural practice by the Indigenous people of North America. Edgar introduced it to Norman so it would help him heal from the trauma and psychological issues he was going through. It is a lodge where people sit and sweat and share their issues which helps them heal.

Edgar aims to revive the cultural practices of his people in the society he lives in. He does so by teaching these practices to the young people of the reservoir. He worked to help and guide the younger generation who were struggling with emotional and psychological issues. In regards to the scarce number of Ojibwe, Bishop states:

For a considerable period after contact, the threat of starvation for most Ojibwe was non-existent. [...] After 1810, starvation for the Northern Ojibwe became a real threat and it is at this point that the earliest cases of famine cannibalism were reported (1975).

Edgar would visit a detention center where young Indians were detained because they had caused trouble and needed psychological healing. Edgar believed that “They didn’t understand the pain, confusion and anger they carried. Those powerful emotions filled the void in the identity that was passed down to them by their parents and their grandparents” (Rice, 2014, p. 158). Edgar felt that it was his duty to remind the younger generation of their native identity by teaching them their traditions. He would take some plants and practice an ancient ritual with the young inmates. When he would reach the center, the plants he would bring with him would have to be inspected. He was offended at first but now he felt a sense of cultural victory that he could pass those sacred plants into the center. Edgar relates:

Once buzzed in, he had to sign in and then subject himself to a rigorous security screening. [...] Edgar found this process disrespectful and a little invasive at first, but he got used to it [...] Just having those medicines inside a youth detention centre was a small triumph for the culture itself (Rice, 2014, p. 160).

Clearly Edgar feels that his strong affiliation to his culture and his need to revive it in others is a means of existence. He tends to believe that culture revival is a means of healing for the Indigenous youth in his society. His dedication and hard work pay off for everyone he tries to help eventually heals. From Edgar’s point of view identity in this novel is based on traditions and cultural practices. Edgar even goes on to save his brother Norman from suicide by helping him become reacquainted with his culture. The cultural continuity practices concentrate on the systems that act to ensure the continuity of cultural communities rather than individual people. The findings of this analysis prove that the communities which have been distinctively successful in saving their younger generation from suicide risk have also been distinguished by continual efforts to uphold and encourage the cultural heritage of their Indigenous background. They tend to exercise direct local authority over important parts of their civic life, and reclaim and preserve access to their own native environment and customs (Chandler & Lalonde, 1998).

2.4 Nature as a Means of Expressing Canadian Indigenous Identity and Culture

It is commonly understood that people are impacted by their circumstances as well as surroundings, and that both environment and genetic code determine "who" people become or rather who they are shaped into. Indigenous people, such as Native Americans, have been shaped and educated by studying their surroundings - geography and environment - throughout history. Dunn states that "[t]he assault on traditional social structures

gave rise to an individual called on to forge his (but seldom her) own identity independently of the ascribed characteristics inhering in one's placement in tradition and nature" (1998, p.53).

Throughout the novel Rice presents many symbolic elements. One of the most symbolic ideas is that some of the female characters who represent the land of the Indigenous people. Korff (2008) in his article states "The land is my mother, my mother is the land", thus referring to land or earth itself as feminine. Speaking in a broader sense they might even go on to represent "Mother Nature". Earth or rather nature are always believed or described by humans to be female. Oksala (2008), states that this is mostly due to the tendency of the nurturing characteristics of nature and women alike, which prompted the patriarchal society in feminizing nature.

In *Legacy*, Rice presents the character of Eva, a female Indigenous woman being killed by the hands of a drunken white man. This is a clear allegory to how the European Invaders took the Indigenous land by using alcohol. Eva's murderer even describes himself as being of Anglo origins, meaning that he is a clear representation of the white conqueror. Rice even describes Mark as such by referring to him and his friend "Mark and Alex were anglos, and they usually all united under the banner of the Canadiens" (2014, p.183). Then there is the character of Eva's mother who also died in a car accident due to a drunken driver. Eva and her mother Clara's lives were both taken because of alcohol, the same way the European invaders took the Indigenous land due to alcohol. Eva's memories of her mother were always associated with nature. In *Legacy*, the author presents this in the novel by describing one of Eva's memories of her mother while she was child. Her mother had taken her to the beach where they were building sand castles:

She looked up at her mother, squinting at the sun behind her, and gave her a front-toothless smile. Eva could only see the silhouette of her mother's wide brimmed straw hat, but as she moved into her shadow, she saw her bright Ojibway cheeks below round dark sunglasses (Rice, 2014, p. 10-11).

Thus Eva and her mother serve as clear representations of the personification of land. Land or rather Mother Nature is personified through the characters of Eva and her mother Clara.

Another symbolic aspect presented by the author is the color green which is a clear representation of nature. The night Eva died, she was wearing a dark green blouse, Rice explains this in the novel "and Eva, with a dark green blouse tucked into her Levi's" (Rice, 2014, p. 37). The fact that Eva died wearing a green is a clear representation of how the European colonizers destroyed nature. This idea is shared by Eva's two brother's Edgar and Stanley later on in the novel by calling the white people murderers for having no respect for trees (Rice, 2014, p. 64). Maria is also described as wearing green when she coincidentally meets her brother Stanley at a party one night, "As he approached, Maria saw her brother so she straightened up slightly. Her long, straight black hair draped over a green sweatshirt and a backpack full of beer" (Rice, 2014, p. 72). Even Kathy who is the Gibson children's aunt is described by in the novel as having a green car once:

Her grey minivan turned the corner and rolled up to the driveway and turned in. Her large trademark prescription sunglasses covered nearly half of her face. Just the previous fall, she traded in her old green station wagon for her new minivan... (Rice, 2014, p. 83).

The fact that Kathy's old car was a green car yet her new one was grey could be a clear representation of how the family used to be happy as green in this novel is an optimistic color. Now that she has a grey car is possibly a symbol of how sad and dull things are for the family now. Yet Kathy takes Maria on a nature walk into green surroundings to make her feel better.

2.5 Presentation of Alcohol to the Indigenous People

The Indigenous people of North America or rather in this case of Canada have a long history of alcohol abuse. The depiction of alcohol abuse or rather drunkenness, which has always been prevalent for decades can't be rejected and poses a paradox which Indigenous writers must contend. It's not a type of mirroring, depicting colonial effect, which non-Indigenous people like to embrace. In general it is a sensitive issue for the Indigenous people because it's quite familiar for the readers. As a result, it tends to be a dilemma for most Indigenous writers as they try to present the reality of the effects of alcoholism on their people through their works.

Prior to colonialism, drinking alcohol was very rare amongst the Indigenous people of North America. Its usage was enabled and was encouraged by the European settlers in order to gain an advantage in negotiations (Beauvais, 1998). Although each indigenous tribe's first encounter with alcohol was different, they nonetheless all share a sad history of colonialism (Whitbeck et al., 2004). Because alcohol was utilized as an instrument of colonization, it is not unexpected that many Indigenous people view alcohol negatively and have positive attitudes toward abstinence. Issues related to alcohol in the Native American societies have been documented since the colonial times (Hinsley & Unrau, 1997). There tends to be a variety of literature available about Native Americans and their consumption of alcohol, including psychological and social factors related to alcoholism (May, 1982). In his *The Sacred Pipe*, Brown asserts that alcoholism has resulted in a condition known as "the broken circle" or "broken Hoop" among Native Americans (Brown, 1989). The word alludes to the disregard for conventional teachings. As a result, including tribal spiritual practices and beliefs into the healing process might be critical to its effectiveness.

In the novel the effects of alcohol on the Indigenous people are presented through several characters. Through these characters, the writer proves how alcohol is the reason for all their issues. Only after these characters abandon alcohol consumption do they unite as a family and their lives change for the better. Thus, proving alcohol is a weapon of division. In this novel, one of the prominent issues faced by most of the characters is alcohol. There is a frequent portrayal of Indigenous characters that tend to be under the influence of alcoholic beverages. Two of the characters become dependent on alcohol as a means of escaping from their issues. The other three characters tend to avoid alcohol and plainly show their dislike of it even though they occasionally drink only when under pressure. Lamarine (1988) proposes three possibilities to explain Native Americans' increased use of "firewater." According to historical perspective, Indians were not equipped to absorb alcohol, which is why its effects were so deadly. The second idea, which is similar to the "firewater thesis" in some ways, focuses on Native American physiological variables. Nonetheless, this notion is supported by metabolic changes that have been proven. The third idea looks at how Native Americans' drinking habits are influenced by societal influences. The name "firewater" is what the Indigenous elders called alcohol when it was first introduced to them. The writer perhaps is alluding to this idea for in his novel, the character Stanley describes beer as warm; perhaps this is symbolic to the Native elders using the term to describe it. In *Legacy* the taste of beer is described through Stanley "The carbonated, yeasty liquid stung his tongue and warmed his throat all the way down to his stomach" (Rice, 2014, p. 75).

Throughout a specific time period in history, the tribal chiefs among the Indigenous people prohibited their people from drinking alcohol. They saw it as a completely destructive beverage having negative impacts on their people. Because many tribe chiefs saw alcohol as having a harmful impact, they prohibited the Indigenous people from 1832 to 1953 (Vizenor, 1984). The character of Eva is a clear representation of the Indian people and perhaps to an extent her character tends to serve as a strong allegory for the land which was invaded and colonized. Eva expresses her dislike for alcohol due to various reasons. Eva's parents died in a car crash because of a drunk man and back home she witnessed too many lives ruined because of alcohol dependency. She remembers how when she was younger her mother was furious with her when she caught her drunk for the first time. Eva always remembers how her mother had that same furious look on her face when lying dead in a casket. Eva's mother just like Eva could serve as a representation of their homeland. As such this is why her mother even in death which was the cause of alcohol had a look of furious dislike on her face. This tends to serve as the dislike of their people for alcohol and how it leads to corruption and downfall. Eva's mother died due to alcohol the same way the colonizers took their land by using alcohol as a weapon against them.

Eva's death occurs due to a drunken accident. Although she tends to avoid drinking altogether, she did however find herself in a situation at a party where she got drunk. Eva is usually a reserved character who does not trust people easily and especially not white people. However, at a party one night, under the influence of alcohol she let her guard down and started flirting with a white man named Mark Miller, who would go on to attempt to rape her and kill her. Mark here is a clear representation of the European invaders. Being a male he tends to serve as the allegory for white conqueror. Native Americans have had contact with alcohol ever since the European arrival to the New World or rather North America, but they have been unable to construct any social environment in which consuming alcohol would be suitable.

Eva being the Indigenous female serves as an allegory for her people and land. As such, her weakening and eventual death caused by alcohol and the white man represents the weakening and downfall of the Indian people

due to alcohol. So alcohol here represents the weapon the invaders used to weaken the Indian people so they could invade their land.

In the novel other characters also struggle with alcohol and its effects. Norman and Maria both go through a phase where they become dependent on alcohol. Both Norman and Maria are unable to move past the trauma and sadness that consume them. They decide to distance themselves from their family and live carefree alcohol-fueled lives. Overcoming trauma tends to be an important element in the process of healing for many people who have misused alcohol since alcohol-related problems are frequently linked to traumatic occurrences. In Maria's case, her aunt helps her heal by taking her on a medicine walk. Eventually Maria quits alcohol and goes back to studying. For Norman, it's much worse for he attempts suicide but Edgar saves him. After that, Edgar helps him heal. In her book *Taking Back Our Spirits: Indigenous Literature, Public Policy, and Healing*, Jo-Ann Episkenew who is a Métis scholar claims that contemporary or rather modern Indigenous literature has:

two transformative functions – healing Indigenous people and advancing social justice in settler society – both components in the process of decolonization. [...] When their testimony reaches a large and diverse audience, it is possible for Indigenous writers to effect healing by advancing social justice (2009, p. 15-17).

Unlike his siblings the character of Stanley is presented by Rice as being renowned among the Indigenous society for distancing himself from alcohol. Stanley connects alcohol with negativity and views it as an evil drink that always leads to trouble:

At a party like this there would be blood. That was always a given.

That's what turned off Stanley the most about the whole rez party scene. It always started off jovially. But at the drop of a hat it could get ugly. If it didn't happen sooner, it would always happen later. Being the one who usually didn't drink, it was always up to him to break up fights, calm indignant party-goers, or call the cops (Rice, 2014, p. 66).

Stanley attends a party where his sister Maria gets into a fight after getting drunk. The author gives clear indication that at Indian parties the attendants are cheerful and get along well but only after the young people get drunk they start fighting. Thus is clearly symbolic to how alcohol serves as the colonial weapon against the Indian people. Through Stanley, the author also explains how alcohol was just like an illusion of temporary enjoyment by stating "The glass bottles inside clinked sharply in unison, almost harmoniously foreshadowing the false euphoric joy inspired by the liquid within" (Rice, 2014, p. 66). It is clear that the author is trying to prove that alcohol is not just a temporary respite but a toxic substance that will ruin the life of anyone who becomes dependent on it. Eva's murder because of a drunken man of Anglo origins is a clear representation of how alcohol is what ruined the Indigenous people. Eva's death serves as an allegory to how the land was lost to European colonizers because of alcohol.

2.6 Healing Through Land, Nature and Culture

The recovery of Indigenous culture and traditions is perceived as healing on an individual and societal level. As a result, efforts to reinstate communal traditions and native language are viewed by contemporary Indigenous people as essential healing acts. Returning to nature or land to participate in cultural practices may have therapeutic effects for both distressed people and entire communities. Rice offers the solution for modern Native Americans in the face of enormous spiritual estrangement as well as identity crisis in his novel. He presents his solution through his characters in *Legacy* and how by resorting to nature and by becoming reacquainted with the practices of their own culture. By doing so he is encouraging the development of Indigenous awareness and self-esteem through his novel.

Land and nature have always been appreciated by the Indigenous people of North America. Eco-critically speaking, Rice's *Legacy* is an endeavor to uncover the manifestation of a hidden culture under the surface. Kailo in

her *Wo(men) and Bears* states that the theory eco-criticism is an acceptable new way to addressing the foundations of as well as the recovering from a culture of violence and death, whose imaginative evolved from a more life-affirming imaginary of regenerativity (2008). The Native Americans tend to believe in coexistence with nature rather than rivalry or domination over it. They value it as much as they value themselves. They believe in having a harmonious relationship with nature. When it comes to the Ojibwe people amongst the Indigenous people, they have always had their own practices and rituals through nature (Densmore, 1979). Many Canadians see Canada's natural heritage as an important element of their national and personal identities and cultures. The past of the Canadian people and current sentiments have included admiration for the natural environment, a yearning for apparently limitless resources, terror and (or) pride in vast stretches of harsh weather and wilderness, and respect and care for the indigenous biodiversity. Such perspectives have been widely articulated in both contemporary and historical literature, as well as in music, art, and other forms of Canadian culture (Turner & Freedman, 2004).

Rice just like many other contemporary Indian novelists reckons that the revival of Indian culture serves as the only solution for those Indians that are stuck between two worlds. Rice emphasizes on the healing power of Indian culture as well as nature. In the novel *Legacy*, land plays a vital role which includes nature as well as culture which serve as a source of healing for some of the characters. The characters form a connection or rather bond with nature and their own indigenous culture. The author expresses the ardent spirituality that distinguishes Indigenous relationship to their land as well as its natural components through touch, hearing and sight.

Underpinned by a political and historical context, the accounts depict fundamental themes of collective and personal loss, as well as reclamation and reconnection with culture and society via education and ceremony. As such, relationships between the settler society and the Canadian state are scrutinized. The resuscitation and the implementation of the Indigenous wisdom, interactions with spiritual energies, and a reframe of the individual suffering within a political and historical framework characterize healing techniques (Stiegelbauer, 1996). Elders frequently serve as teachers and healers. In Koppedray's *The Way Of The Pipe: Aboriginal Spirituality And Symbolic Healing In Canadian Prisons*, ethnography of Elder-led spiritual healing in Western Canadian jails, Waldram discusses therapeutic practice with the goal of:

spiritual and cultural reintegration and the need for Aboriginal inmates to develop better identities as Aboriginal persons. This is an effort to undo the damage done to both Aboriginal society and the Aboriginal psyche by colonization and assimilation (Koppedray, 2000, p. 266-267).

In the novel Edgar works with Indigenous youth held in prisons or rather detention centers who are suffering from trauma or alcohol dependency. He does so by teaching them ceremonies practiced by their elders. Also, he talks about their heritage for them which excites them and stimulates their interests. The oral narrations and ceremonial practices taught to these youth by Edgar serve as cultural revival and by the use of plants to perform these rituals he combines culture to nature. Together cultural practices through nature help the young Indigenous people heal from all the psychological issues they are harboring within themselves. Norman too suffers from severe depression and alcohol dependency and goes through a healing process that is introduced to him by his brother Edgar. It is the practice of sweat lodge which is a place where the Indigenous people sit down to sweat together and share their issues. So once again the combination of natural elements as well as oral traditions serves as a means of healing for the character of Norman.

Healing begins when people recognize the issues they need to address and start to learn about their own self that has tended to be drowning in alcoholism and related difficulties. This can be viewed as exploring the identity of oneself. Maria is another character who finds healing through nature when she takes a medicine walk with her aunt Kathy. After going on a walk where they collect herbs as a part of a ritual their people practice, Maria is able to express her feelings and discuss the pain she has been feeling as a result of the death of her parents and the murder of her sister Eva. For Maria this medicine walk was a path of healing. After suffering from alcohol dependency for so long and dropping out of school, she had become an extremely depressed person. It was for this reason that her aunt Kathy wanted to help her heal through the land by taking her on a medicine walk. Maria is very optimistic about it and she describes her surroundings which give her a sense of renewal:

Various songbirds chirped from the trees above, weaving a beautiful random medley together that embodied the refreshing sense of renewal that seemed to descend like a comforting dew around her (Rice, 2014, p. 82).

Gross, an Anishinaabe professor is one of many who feel that "myths teach morals, especially environmental ethics" to his own understanding and that of the indigenous peoples. Cheney who is an environmental philosopher believes that "axiomatic ... that a culture that has not been environmentally ruinous in its long membership in the Earth community must ... have a sophisticated and effective ethic concerning its presence and practice," which he attributes to "epistemology of stories." (2002).

Maria found healing through nature. Her reconnection with nature on the medicine walk she took with her aunt Kathy didn't just give her a sense of renewal but rather it reconnected her with her culture. Kathy took Maria into the bush and the wilderness as a means of healing and it worked. Reconnection with nature and the relief from expressing herself by vocalizing her troubles gave Maria an emotional purge. In the *Legacy*, Rice describes Maria's feeling of healing through nature from her perspective "As she exhaled, she stared straight into the thick trees and bush in front of her. The emotional purge had left her exhausted. But it gave way for something else" (2014, p. 10). In this scenario, the transient interaction shows the lack of boundaries between humans and nature.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, Rice's *Legacy* serves an awakening call for the Indigenous people of Canada to return to nature by practicing their cultural traditions. The writer presents the idea that humans can't live fulfilled lives of contentment when apart from the natural environment. They must regard themselves as integral members of the entire ecological system. The notion is presented that the characters lose their identity when they live separately from the nature. The reason for this is that the Indigenous Canadian culture highly revolves around nature.

The characters in the novel eventually find healing through nature by returning to their cultural practices. Alcohol dependency is a major issue in this novel, yet the writer is successful in proving that once the characters abandon it, their lives change positively. It is very clear that the writer, who is an Indigenous Canadian himself has a negative view about alcohol and even gives the impression that it is more like a weapon of the European invaders in order to divide the Indigenous people.

4. References

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